BILL SCHUETTE
MICHIGAN ATTORNEY GENERAL

Report on the Escape of Prisoner

MICHAEL DAVID ELLIOT

From the Ionia Correctional Facility
On Sunday, February 2, 2014

PREPARED BY
THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

July 21, 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MICHAEL DAVID ELLIOT,
Prisoner No. 236879
Ionia Correctional Facility

Serving four life-without-parole sentences for first-degree murder and other dangerous felonies

On Sunday, February 2, 2014, *Michael David Elliot escaped from the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) Ionia Correctional Facility (ICF). He was captured approximately 24 hours later in Indiana and subsequently extradited back to Michigan. Elliot is serving four life-without-parole sentences for first-degree murder and other dangerous felonies. The Ionia County Prosecutor has charged Elliot with kidnapping, carjacking, and escape.*

In response to Elliot's escape, Governor Rick Snyder asked Attorney General Bill Schuette to conduct an independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding the escape. The Attorney General agreed to conduct an independent investigation of the escape and provide a report of his findings. Attorney General staff reviewed current facility operations and policies, photographs and videos of the incident, MDOC staff interviews and incident reports. In addition, Attorney General staff conducted interviews with Elliot, other inmates, MDOC staff, and conducted on-site visits. More than 1,000 pages of documents were reviewed during the course of the investigation. An expert consultant with 37 years of corrections management was retained to assist in the investigation.

The investigation uncovered several areas of significant concern with respect to the security operations at ICF at both the staff and management level.

THE REPORT WILL FOCUS ON FIVE KEY AREAS:

I. Facility Features
II. Security Measures
III. The Escape
IV. Security Failures
V. Recommendations

CRITICAL DETERMINATIONS

Technology and Personnel Failures

1. PIRAMID MICROWAVE ALERT SYSTEM FAILURE

There was a complete breakdown in the effectiveness of the PIRAMID microwave alert system due to officer inattention and error and a failure to ensure that the entire system was operational and aligned to detect human intrusion.

2. VIDEO SURVEILLANCE FAILURE

There was a significant breakdown in the effectiveness of the ICF video surveillance system due to the inattentiveness of the officer responsible for monitoring the video feed and the failure to follow the staffing policy in the Control Center.

The video surveillance system is flawed because of its inability to automatically scroll through the video feed.

3. E-FLEX WIRE ALARM SYSTEM FAILURE

The failure to keep the E-Flex wire alarm system, which is contained in an interior fence, operational contributed to Elliot's escape.

4. PRISONER COUNT PROCEDURE FAILURE

The formal count procedures were inadequate and staff failed to follow informal count procedures. Both of these factors contributed to Elliot's escape.

5. FENCING SYSTEM FAILURE

Structural weaknesses in the fencing system were a significant contributing factor in Elliot's escape.

6. SECURITY SYSTEM FAILURE AND PERSONNEL ERROR AND INATTENTION

To date, all available information indicates that Elliot acted alone in the escape, but was able to capitalize on officer inattention, officer error, and weaknesses in the ICF security system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PIRAMID MICROWAVE INTRUSION ALERT SYSTEM

The PIRAMID microwave intrusion alert system must be modified to include an additional audible alarm that continuously alerts the monitor room officer that a zone is not reactivated.

MDOC must ensure facility compliance with established policies respecting maintenance and inspection of security measures and, in particular, the regular inspection of all microwave and motion sensors for the PIRAMID system.

2. VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

MDOC must change the manner in which the video surveillance system operates. The cameras present an image in full screen in the Monitor Room, which remains the same until the officer switches to another camera. This system must be replaced with a system in which each camera feeds to a monitor for a specific designated time. This will enable the feed from all cameras to be viewed for a pre-determined time.

3. E-FLEX WIRE ALARM SYSTEM

The E-Flex wire alarm system contained in the interior slow-down fence must be restored to operation as it is the first structural line of defense.

4. PRISON COUNT PROCEDURE

MDOC and ICF must sufficiently train staff and confirm that policy is being adhered to with respect to the appropriate use of existing formal and informal prisoner count procedures.

MDOC must review existing policies to determine whether the number of formal prisoner counts should be modified to prevent an eight-hour span of time between counts.

5. FENCING SYSTEM

All slow-down fences must be inspected and repaired to ensure that there are no gaps or structural weaknesses. It is also recommended that slow-down fences be established that would limit inmate movement to areas that are within the observation of the assigned yard officer.

The sally port gate fencing must be firmly secured to its frame to prevent the unraveling of the chain-link fabric.

6. MANNING GUARD TOWERS

MDOC must reconsider whether to station armed officers in the guard towers to achieve a sufficient deterrent effect on prisoners considering escape attempts.

7. PERIMETER PATROL

MDOC must consider restoring the perimeter patrol by an armed officer as a full-time position, rather than as a collateral duty of the front lobby officer, especially if the guard towers are not manned.

8. TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT

MDOC must ensure that there is regular training of officers with respect to the duties of the Control Center, including the critical duties performed by the officer in the Monitor Room. Management must assure performance of these duties. In addition, management should consider implementing techniques, such as, time limits and rotation, to ensure that officers watching monitor screens remain alert and vigilant.

9. SNOW REMOVAL

MDOC must reevaluate snow removal strategies in order to reduce visual obstructions.

10. CLOTHING POLICY

MDOC must reevaluate the issuance of prison clothing that can be used as camouflage in the natural environment.

11. PRISONER SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

MDOC must reevaluate their security classification process to determine whether an inmate serving life without parole should ever be classified as lower security Level II. At the very least, MDOC must incorporate a procedure where inmates serving life without parole require a higher degree of supervision.

12. PRISONER PURCHASE POLICY

MDOC must reconsider procedures allowing inmates to purchase hobby scissors and other like items that can be fashioned into a weapon or an escape tool. Rather, MDOC must consider a policy that may allow prisoners to use these items, but requires their return so that an accounting can be made.

INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL DAVID ELLIOT

Prisoner No. 236879
Ionia Corrections Facility

Serving 4 life-without-parole sentences for 1st degree murder, additional dangerous felonies.

*"Elliot had an almost **eight-hour time period** in which to complete his escape due to the facility's failure to regularly comply with orders regarding prisoner informal count procedures and due to existing formal count policy."*

On February 2, 2014, *Michael David Elliot escaped from the Ionia Correctional Facility. To date, all available information indicates that Elliot acted alone, but was able to capitalize on a number of significant failures in the security measures at ICF. Elliot was able to easily obtain clothes that camouflaged him in the environment and tools to aid him in his escape. He was able to avoid detection at the facility's first structural line of defense due to the facility's failure to ensure that the internal fencing wire alert system was operational. Video monitoring that should have detected him was of no value due to technological and personnel failures. Specific failures include: officer inattentiveness, failure to follow policies regarding the staffing of the Monitor Room, and the failure of the video camera system to automatically scroll through feed. Microwave alert systems that should have set off an alarm when Elliot intruded into various zones did not emit an audible alarm due to the failure to ensure that the sensors were properly aligned and due to officer error in failing to reactivate the sensors.*

Elliot had an almost eight-hour time period in which to complete his escape due to the facility's failure to regularly comply with orders regarding prisoner informal count procedures and due to existing formal count policy. The failure to maintain existing security systems and the failure to ensure that the fencing was structurally sound contributed to his escape.

This report provides an assessment of the state of ICF's security measures at the time of Elliot's escape. Its purpose is to identify factors contributing to the escape and to make recommendations to help prevent future escapes.

I. Facility Features

The Ionia Maximum Correctional Facility opened in 1987 and is located in Ionia County. It is comprised of five higher security housing units and two lower security housing units. Lower Level II housing consists of a large pole-barn construction divided into two units with 140 beds in each unit. The units have showers, a laundry, and a fenced recreation yard.

Upon entry into ICF, a prisoner is classified at a particular security level according to management and confinement requirements necessary for protection of the public, prevention of escape, maintenance of control and order, and the safety of staff and prisoners.

Each facility has at least one Security Classification Committee (SCC) that is responsible for ensuring proper placement at the facility. Prisoners are reevaluated for security classification every year

There are five classifications: Level I, II, IV, V, and administrative segregation. Level I is the least secure; administrative segregation is the most secure. Each prisoner's appropriate security classification is determined using the Security Classification Screen.

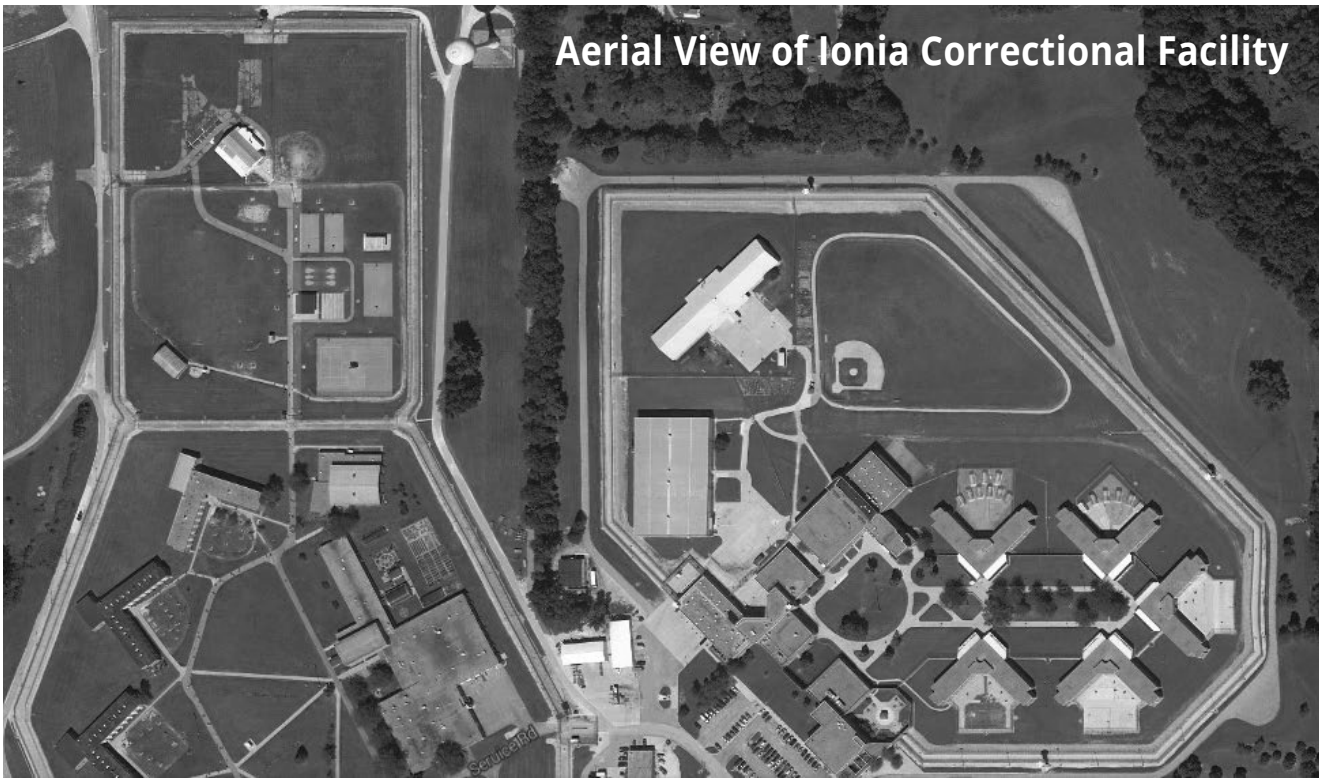
Elliot was classified as a security Level II despite the fact that he was serving four life-without-parole sentences for first-degree murder and other dangerous felonies. Level II prisoners have separate yard areas with access to a weight pit and recreation area. Prisoners in the recreation area surrounding the housing unit are supervised by a yard officer. The number of prisoners in the yard varies as inmates move around the permitted areas.

The housing and recreation area is separated from other buildings in the complex by chain-link fencing referred to as the "slow-down fence." Among the other buildings are the Prisoner Services Building, the prison factory, the Food Service Building, and the Administration Building.

The Prisoner Services Building is utilized by both Level II and V prisoners. It contains classrooms, an auditorium, a gymnasium, a weight room, a commissary, and a barber shop. A separate building contains food services, prisoner property, and maintenance.

The Administration Building contains the facility's Control Center, Record Office, Business Office, and visiting areas. Adjacent to the Control Center is a small room referred to as the Monitor Room where various security systems are constantly monitored. It is accessible only through the Control Center.

The facility also has a secured, controlled entryway called a sally port. The sally port is located in the rear of the facility and operates as a security gate for vehicles to enter the secure area. It contains two chain-link gates with an area in between used for the inspection of vehicles entering or leaving the facility. The sally port is only staffed from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. During the hours it is not staffed, an officer is sent to the sally port if there is traffic.



Aerial View of Ionia Correctional Facility

Unmanned Guard Tower

II. Security Measures

The security at ICF consisted of the following measures:

Video Surveillance

There are 96 security cameras located at various places throughout the facility. These cameras feed into six monitors located in the Monitor Room. Five of the monitors view the feed of only one camera at a time, and are not capable of automatic scrolling. The sixth monitor is divided into quadrants and displays the feed of four cameras simultaneously. That monitor has, by custom, been dedicated to the sally port area. The feed from all 96 cameras is routinely recorded and maintained for playback. All of the areas between the Level II housing, the prison factory, and the rear sally port are covered by operational cameras.

PIRAMID Alert System

Areas between the Level II housing, the prison factory, and the rear sally port are covered by a microwave detection system. The Passive InfraRed and Microwave Intruder Detection system (PIRAMID) consists of a transmitter and receiver that form a link. The transmitter radiates modulated microwave energy in the direction of the receiver, where it is detected. The received energy is amplified and processed so that it causes the output alarm relay to be energized under normal conditions. When a person enters the path of the radiated energy, the energy detected by the receiver is changed, causing the output relay to de-energize resulting in an alarm.

The PIRAMID systems are monitored by an officer in the Monitor Room. Intrusion into a covered zone will cause both an audible and visual alarm. At the same time the audible alarm sounds, a red line will appear at the bottom of the screen of the system monitor that shows the invaded zone. The officer can stop the audible alert by clicking on an attached mouse. A second click is necessary to remove the visual alert. After this second click, the system is re-armed and the red light changes to green. This green light signals that the system is rearmed and functional in the specific zone. But there is no additional audible sound alerting an officer that the system has not been reactivated. In other words, the PIRAMID system allows an officer to silence the audible alarm without re-arming the system.

MDOC staff is to ensure that the equipment is fully operational. At the beginning of each shift, a yard officer tests various PIRAMID zones by intruding into them. An audible alert will sound and a red line for that zone will appear on the monitor. After confirming by radio that the alert was due to testing, the officer in the Monitor Room is to clear the alerts and rearm the system.

Fencing

Two parallel electrified 12-foot external chain-link fences with razor ribbon surround the entire facility. A rear sally port operates as a secure gate that allows for traffic into and out of the facility. There is an outer fence that controls entry into the sally port area. Inside the rear sally port there is a pit that allows inspection of the underside of a vehicle. Once the inspection is complete, an inner fence opens to allow entry into the secure area of the facility. The inner and outer sally port fences are not electrified.

To ensure that the electrified portions of the perimeter fence are operational a yard officer walks the perimeter at the beginning of each shift and tests the fence at various points by striking it with a fiberglass pole. The officer remains in radio contact with the monitor room officer while this process is completed. The process continues until the fence has been tested and confirmed to be activated.

Additional fencing, called the slow-down fence, separates the prison buildings from the recreation yard. The fencing runs down a sloping field. This fence contains a cable that was once part of an E-Flex wire alarm system. E-Flex is an intrusion alert system designed to detect penetration through the chain-link fabric of a fence. An alarm is set off whenever someone physically pulls or tugs on the chain-link fabric. The E-Flex cable in this fence has not been operational for more than seven years.

Broken E-Flex wire.

Periodic Prisoner Counts

ICF prisoner count procedures consist of five formal counts in a 24-hour period. The first count is at midnight, followed by a count at 3:00 a.m., 5:15 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and a final count at 9:15 p.m. Informal counts are to occur each hour between the formal counts.

Perimeter Patrols

The perimeter of the facility is routinely patrolled by armed personnel in an Alert Response Vehicle (ARV). In the past, an officer was assigned to this duty full-time. Now, the front lobby officer performs this task as a collateral duty. Although policy requires hourly patrols, the front lobby officer performs this task as other duties allow.

Guard Towers

There are five observation towers surrounding the perimeter of the facility. In July of 2013, MDOC eliminated the placement of armed officers in these towers.

III. The Escape

On February 2, 2014, at 11:30 a.m., Elliot ate lunch in the dining room. During the 1:00 p.m. formal count he was observed at his assigned bed within the Level II unit until the unit was called for the evening meal at approximately 4:10 p.m. He then prepared for the escape.

Elliot's Preparation for the Escape

Elliot put on civilian clothing, which he is permitted to have by policy, under prison-issued white thermal underwear. He fashioned a ski mask from another pair of thermal underwear. He then put on a larger set of prison clothes, which he had retrieved from the dirty clothes receptacle, over the top of the thermals. He waited for other inmates to begin to return to the unit from the evening meal and then made his way out of the housing unit into the yard taking with him a metal hook he had removed from his locker, a pair of rounded hobby craft scissors he had purchased from the commissary, and the ski mask.

The Escape

A sole yard officer was watching the inmates in the yard. Elliot made his way toward the left corner of the Level II housing unit. When Elliot was sure that the yard officer was not watching he moved behind the corner of the unit. He there discarded the oversized prison clothes burying them in the snow. He put on the ski mask and began crawling in the snow toward the area where he had previously observed a gap between the ground and the slow-down fence using the snow banks for concealment.

Elliot reported that he had a difficult time getting through the gap under the fence. He used the metal clothes hook to clear away the snow and chip ice to make the gap wider. He then crawled on his belly and squirmed through the gap under the fence. Once Elliot made it through the slow-down

Elliot's path under the slow-down fence.

fence he slowly crawled toward the right rear corner of the prison factory.

A security camera documented Elliot crawling from the slow-down fence toward the right rear corner of the prison factory at 5:56 p.m. Elliot moved slowly and was not detected by the yard officer.

When Elliot reached the factory, he stood up and ran across the rear of the building. Although this area was not visible to the yard officer, it was in full view of one of the security cameras. A video recording clearly shows Elliot running along the full length of the rear of the factory.

Upon reaching the factory, Elliot came within Zone 301 of the PIRAMID microwave detection system. The system is designed to alarm when human intrusion occurs but it did not do so when he passed by the building. It was later learned that the sensor, although activated and functioning at the time, was misaligned creating a dead spot close to the ground for approximately three to six feet from the building. By crawling up to the building, Elliot avoided the detection system.

Once Elliot reached the rear left corner of the factory he again crouched into the snow. After watching a group of inmates returning from their evening meal, he began crawling through the snow piles to avoid detection. A security camera in the sally port area captured Elliot at this time. A video recording shows him crawling in a slow methodical manner, using the snow for concealment.

Video recordings establish that Elliot reached the rear sally port inner gate at 6:05 p.m. He moved into an area of snow that had been piled high enough to conceal his presence. The area was part of PIRAMID Zone 300. Elliot's movements should have set off an alert in the microwave detection system, but they did not. It was later discovered that Zone 300 had not been reset after being tested at 2:49 p.m., and had remained disarmed until reset at 8:24 p.m.

Fence unraveled by Elliot.

III. The Escape

Upon reaching the sally port inner gate, Elliot rolled on his back and began working on the fence. He used the scissors to pry open bends in the fence strands surrounding the bottom wire holding the fence in place. He then unraveled each strand approximately 24 inches from the bottom of the fence. Using his belt and buckle to pull the unraveled strands to the side, he enlarged the hole. A video recording shows that by 6:39 p.m. the hole was big enough for Elliot to crawl through the separated fabric and enter the sally port area.

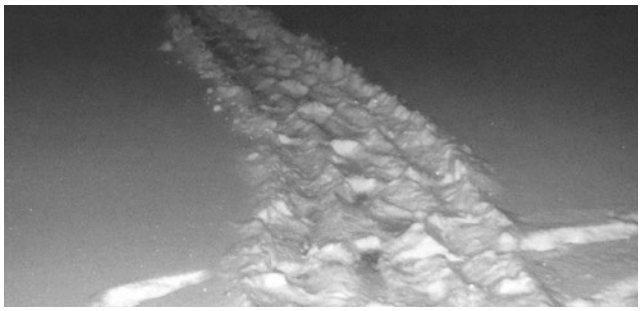
During the period of time that Elliot was working on unraveling the fence strands, the ARV patrol vehicle passed by the sally port. A video recording confirms that the patrol vehicle drove past Elliot, but did not detect him.

As soon as Elliot got through the inner sally port fence, he stood up and ran to the vehicle inspection pit. He jumped into the pit and remained there for a brief time. A video recording shows that at 6:40 p.m. he emerged from the vehicle pit near the rear sally port's outer perimeter gate. He then lay on his back near the perimeter gate. A short time later he moved to the right and began working on the fence fabric of the rear sally port's perimeter gate. Using the same method he used to break through the inner fence and into the sally port, he unraveled a hole large enough to slip through the outside gate.

As Elliot made his way to the outer perimeter gate, he passed through PIRAMID Zone 207, but the microwave detection system again did not trigger an alarm. It was subsequently determined that Zone 207, like Zone 300, had not been reset after being tested at 2:50 p.m. Like Zone 300, Zone 207 remained disarmed until 8:24 p.m., well after Elliot had escaped. It was also determined that Zone 207 was misaligned and emitting its sensor beam too high. A video recording shows that Elliot crawled through the hole he made in the outside perimeter fencing of the sally port gate at 6:53 p.m. He then completed his escape by running to the right and away from the perimeter.

At 7:33 p.m., the ARV driver made another round, but did not see the holes in the sally port fencing. Sometime after 9:03 p.m., a second ARV driver also failed to see the holes. Both drivers reported snow piles obstructed their view.

At 9:15 p.m., a formal count was conducted and Elliot was discovered missing. An immediate search of the housing unit was conducted and a second count was conducted that resulted in the missing inmate being confirmed as Elliot. The siren was sounded at 9:42 p.m.



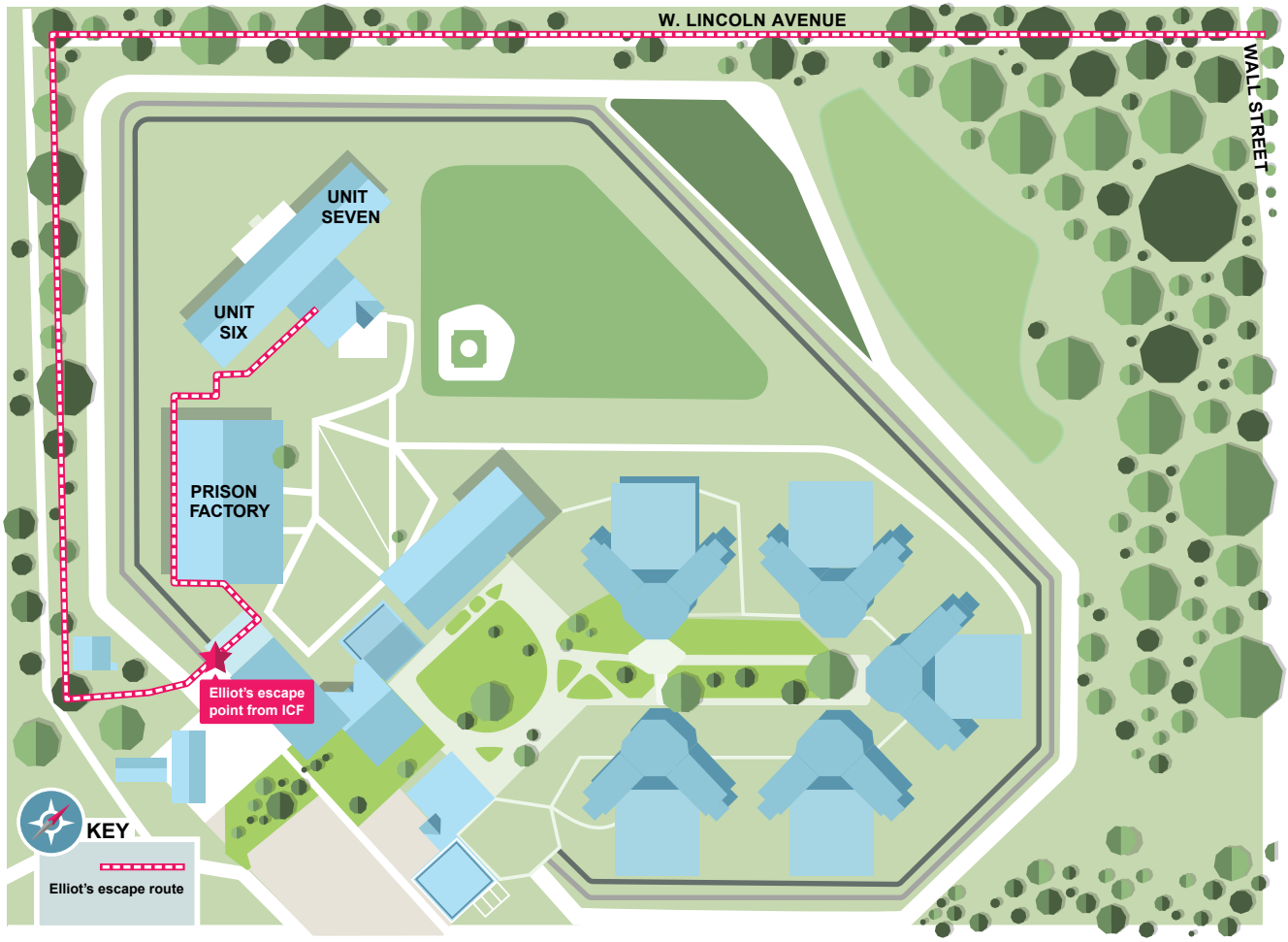
Elliot's snow tracks showing path of escape

The Response to the Escape

Shortly before 10:00 p.m., the ICF Command Center was activated and Emergency Response Team members were activated from the Ionia, Carson City, Saginaw, and St. Louis Correctional Facilities. A task force was also assembled of outside law enforcement comprised of Michigan State Police as the lead investigative agency, Ionia law enforcement, United States Marshals Service Apprehension Team, and MDOC's Absconder Recovery Unit.

The ICF Warden, ICF Deputy Warden, MDOC Director, and the MDOC Assistant Director responded to the facility.

Elliot's Escape Route



III. The Escape

Elliot's Actions after the Escape

After escaping the perimeter of the facility, Elliot walked toward the city of Ionia. He entered a pole barn near an occupied house and took a hammer, box cutter, and some duct tape. As he walked into the city he saw a woman sitting in a red Jeep Liberty. Armed with a box cutter, Elliot approached and demanded that she drive him away from the area. At his direction she drove him south towards Indiana.

At some point, they arrived at a gas station just south of the Michigan-Indiana state line. Elliot told the woman to turn off the car. He took the keys from her and went into the station to buy gas with the money that he also took from her. When Elliot left the vehicle, the woman used her cell phone to call 911. The 911 operator instructed her to lock herself in the restroom at the gas station and await law enforcement.

After Elliot pumped the gas, he went back into the gas station and knocked on the door of the restroom. He became suspicious when the woman did not immediately come out. He then left the station in her vehicle.

Shortly thereafter Elliot abandoned the vehicle in LaGrange County, Indiana. Elliot walked until he came to a town and there broke into a church where he stole two steak knives among other items. Elliot then went across the street to a parking lot where he found a vehicle with its keys in the ignition. Elliot stole that car and drove it until it was out of gas.

Gas station surveillance camera footage of Elliot.

Elliot's Capture

After abandoning the second vechile, Elliot saw a black Monte Carlo with its engine running parked at a factory and stole that car. The owner of the Monte Carlo immediately discovered the theft and reported it to the police. A report was put out about the Monte Carlo and a patrolling deputy sheriff saw it. When the deputy attempted a traffic stop, Elliot drove off. A chase ensued until other deputies deflated two of Elliot's tires by deploying "stop sticks" causing him to eventually drive into a snow bank.

Elliot was arrested in La Porte, Indiana on February 3, 2014, less than 24 hours after his escape.

Screenshot of CNN reporting on Elliot's escape.

IV. Security Failures

There were significant security failures that contributed to Elliot's escape.

1. PIRAMID ALERT SYSTEM

On the day of Elliot's escape, the monitor room officer began a shift test of each perimeter zone soon after assuming the duties of the position. When Zones 300 and 207 were alarmed at 2:49 p.m. and 2:50 p.m. the monitor room officer acknowledged each zone but inexplicably failed to reset the two zones. The zones were not reset until 8:24 p.m. after the failure to reactivate was discovered by the shift lieutenant and well after Elliot had escaped.

The shift commander's statement indicates that after entering the Monitor Room, she observed the red lines on the screen showing that the zones had not been secured. But the shift lieutenant failed to inform anyone about the deactivated PIRAMID zones and did not order a single officer to check the zones to ensure their safety. The shift lieutenant also failed to ask the monitor room officer why the alarms were not reactivated. When later questioned, the monitor room officer admitted that she had been part of the testing of the PIRAMID system at the beginning of the shift, and that she had acknowledged the alarm with a click of the mouse. She could not offer any explanation as to why she did not secure the zones with a second click of the mouse.

Records show that there were numerous dates where the alarms were tested and acknowledged but not secured for several hours at a time. With respect to the two sally port zones through which Elliot escaped (Zones 207 and 300), ICF staff reports that those zones are sometimes intentionally not secured due to sally port traffic during weekday operating hours. But ICF's zone reports show that, from November 1, 2013 through February 2, 2014, ICF staff failed to secure the two sally port zones through which Elliot escaped 135 times outside of weekday operating hours. These repeated failures reveal an unacceptable pattern of conduct. Moreover, prior to Elliot's escape, ICF's former acting warden and deputy warden had never reviewed these zone reports and were, in fact, unaware of the existence of the zone reports.

In addition to the repeated failure to secure the PIRAMID zones, two of the PIRAMID sensors through which Elliot escaped were misaligned and emitting their sensor beams too high. Zone 301, which is situated at the back side of the prison factory, and Zone 207, which covers the area just outside of the sally port gate, contained sensors that were aimed too high to detect intrusion by a person crawling on the ground as Elliot did.

If Zone 300 had been reset, it would have detected Elliot's presence inside the sally port. If Zone 207 had been aligned properly and reset, it too would have detected Elliot's presence at the sally port gate.

And if Zone 301 had been properly aligned, it too would have detected Elliot's presence behind the prison factory.

The failure of individual officers to reactivate the alarms and the complete failure of ICF management to ensure that security mechanisms are aligned and operating properly and security policies were followed are major contributing factors in Elliot's escape.

2. VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

There was a significant breakdown in the effectiveness of the video surveillance system due to officer inattentiveness and violations of policy relating to the manning of the Control Room. Again, all of the video cameras feed into the monitors in the Monitor Room, which is adjacent to the Control Center. The Control Center is routinely staffed by at least three officers: the shift lieutenant, the control center officer, and the monitor room officer. Policy requires the monitor room officer to be in the Monitor Room to monitor all cameras and report any unusual incidents to the Control Center supervisor and to monitor and respond to all activity on the computer screen. The control center officer is to assist shift supervision in the daily Control Center operations. The shift commander is to remain in the Control Center at all times unless relieved by another officer. The shift commander in charge during Elliot's escape was previously given this specific directive by the deputy warden, who explicitly ordered the shift commander to remain in the Control Center unless relieved.

Neither this policy nor this directive was followed on the day of Elliot's escape. On this Super Bowl Sunday, the corrections staff had a potluck dinner in the break room, which had a television. A videotape confirms that the shift lieutenant and control room officer left the Control Center at 3:38 p.m. This left the monitor room officer with the sole responsibility for all control center activities as well as watching the monitors in the adjacent Monitor Room. The shift lieutenant did not return to the Control Center until around 4:00 p.m., followed by the control room officer a few minutes later.

At about 4:30 p.m., a sergeant came to the Control Center so that the shift lieutenant could leave to perform other duties. By 4:39 p.m., the monitor room officer had also left the Control Center to eat. The monitor room officer returned at about 5:12 p.m. The shift lieutenant returned and the sergeant left at about 5:40 p.m. The log book shows that the shift lieutenant made rounds at 6:35 p.m.

At approximately 7:30 p.m., all three officers were in the Control Center when the shift lieutenant allowed the other two officers to go to an administration area to use the FAX machine. They were gone only a short time, but, again, a lone officer was left in the Control Center. At about 8:00 p.m., the shift lieutenant asked the other two officers to go to the break

room and clean up after the potluck dinner. Yet again, the shift lieutenant was in the Control Center alone from about 8 p.m. until another officer arrived at about 8:20 p.m. That officer remained until the control center and monitor room officers returned at about 8:42 p.m.

The video surveillance system recorded Elliot escaping through the sally port between approximately 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. The sally port video feed, which feeds into the Monitor Room, should have appeared on the quad monitor dedicated to the sally port during that time. It appears that the shift lieutenant was in the Control Center during some of the time between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. And according to a statement made by the monitor room officer, both she and the control center officer were in the Control Center throughout this critical time. But it is not clear if anyone was in the adjacent Monitor Room during that time. What is clear is that no one, including the Monitor Room officer, saw Elliot escaping on the monitor. The dereliction of duties in these highly critical positions played a significant role in Elliot's escape.

3. E-FLEX WIRE ALARM SYSTEM

The slow-down fence contains a cable that was once part of an E-Flex wire alarm system that is designed to detect penetration of the chain link fabric. But the E-Flex cable has not been operational for at least seven years. Had this system been operational it would likely have activated the fence alarm as Elliot reported that he got caught on the bottom fencing as he crawled underneath it. The failure of ICF management to have this system operational is a significant contributing factor in Elliot's escape.

4. PRISONER COUNT PROCEDURE

Documentary evidence shows that informal prisoner counts do not occur regularly, and, more often, do not occur at all. Those that do occur are not conducted in a manner to reconcile the total population. The informal counts required by ICF post orders and operating procedures did not occur during the afternoon shift when Elliot escaped. Elliot, although present for the 1:25 p.m. formal count, had escaped before the next formal count at 9:15 p.m. This time span between counts allowed Elliot to successfully escape by providing him ample time to escape the facility and additional time to flee the area.

Individual officer failure to conduct appropriate counts as required by policy and ICF management's failure to ensure facility compliance with security policies played a significant role in Elliot's escape.

5. FENCING

There were two significant structural weaknesses noted with respect to the slow-down fence and the sally port gates.

The terrain under the slow-down fence provided a large gap between the ground and the bottom of the fence that Elliot was able to use in his escape. And the fencing of the sally port gates should have been more firmly anchored or sealed to the bottom frame to prevent the unraveling of the chain-link fabric.

The failure to routinely check the slow-down fence for structural weaknesses or security gaps and the failure to properly secure the sally port gates was a factor in Elliot's escape.

6. GUARD TOWERS

In July of 2013, MDOC eliminated the use of the five observation towers surrounding the perimeter in lieu of enhanced video surveillance, a shock fence, and microwave zones. Although guard towers surrounded the perimeter of the facility, only the guard tower located at the sally port had a view of any part of Elliot's escape route. In fact, that guard tower was the only one that had a view of any part of the Level II area. And that guard tower was only manned if the sally port was operational. Because the sally port was not operational on Sundays this particular tower would not have been manned on the day of Elliot's escape even under prior practice.

However, since the elimination of armed guard towers, two escape attempts have been made. In the first attempt the inmate was able to successfully scale the shock fence before being discovered and apprehended. The second was Elliot's successful escape. This raises at least the question of whether armed staff positioned in the guard towers has a significant deterrent effect. Many of the correctional officers who were interviewed saw the elimination of the use of guard towers as a contributing factor to the escape. But it is difficult to conclusively determine that the failure to man the guard towers played a role in Elliot's escape.

7. PERIMETER PATROLS

A log of the ARV rounds show that the ARV passed by while Elliot was making his way toward the sally port and while he was at the gate. The ARV passed by the sally port gates approximately 20 feet from the outside gate.

In all, on the day of the escape the ARV completed six rounds of the perimeter between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Three of the rounds were during the time Elliot was actively involved in the escape, but his presence went undetected. The video shows Elliot almost completely camouflaged by snow piles making it difficult for the ARV officer to see Elliot.

Although continuous patrols around the perimeter by armed staff is sound corrections policy, it is difficult to conclusively determine that the failure to continuously patrol the perimeter was a significant contributing factor to Elliot's escape.

V. Recommendations

1. PIRAMID MICROWAVE INTRUSION ALERT SYSTEM

The PIRAMID microwave intrusion alert system must be modified to include an additional audible alarm that continuously alerts the monitor room officer that a zone is not reactivated.

MDOC must ensure facility compliance with established policies respecting maintenance and inspection of security measures and, in particular, the regular inspection of all microwave and motion sensors for the PIRAMID system.

2. VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

MDOC must change the manner in which the video surveillance system operates. The cameras present an image in full screen in the Monitor Room, which remains the same until the officer switches to another camera. This system must be replaced with a system in which each camera feeds to a monitor for a specific designated time. This will enable the feed from all cameras to be viewed for a pre-determined time.

3. E-FLEX WIRE ALARM SYSTEM

The E-Flex wire alarm system contained in the interior slow-down fence must be restored to operation as it is the first structural line of defense.

4. PRISON COUNT PROCEDURE

MDOC and ICF must sufficiently train staff and confirm that policy is being adhered to with respect to the appropriate use of existing formal and informal prisoner count procedures.

MDOC must review existing policies to determine whether the number of formal prisoner counts should be modified to prevent an eight-hour span of time between counts.

5. FENCING SYSTEM

All slow-down fences must be inspected and repaired to ensure that there are no gaps or structural weaknesses.
It is also recommended that slow-down fences be established that would limit inmate movement to areas that are within the observation of the assigned yard officer.

The sally port gate fencing must be firmly secured to its frame to prevent the unraveling of the chain-link fabric.

6. MANNING GUARD TOWERS

MDOC must reconsider whether to station armed officers in the guard towers to achieve a sufficient deterrent effect on prisoners considering escape attempts.

7. PERIMETER PATROL

MDOC must consider restoring the perimeter patrol by an armed officer as a full-time position, rather than as a collateral duty of the front lobby officer, especially if the guard towers are not manned.

8. TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT

MDOC must ensure that there is regular training of officers with respect to the duties of the Control Center, including the critical duties performed by the officer in the Monitor Room. Management must assure performance of these duties. In addition, management should consider implementing techniques such as time limits and rotation to assure that officers watching monitor screens remain alert and vigilant.

9. SNOW REMOVAL

MDOC must reevaluate snow removal strategies in order to reduce visual obstructions.

10. CLOTHING POLICY

MDOC must reevaluate the issuance of prison clothing that can be used as camouflage in the natural environment.

11. PRISONER SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

MDOC must reevaluate their security classification process to determine whether an inmate serving life without parole should ever be classified as a lower security Level II. At the very least, MDOC must incorporate a procedure where inmates serving life without parole require a higher degree of supervision.

12. PRISONER PURCHASE POLICY

MDOC must reconsider procedures allowing inmates to purchase hobby scissors and other like items that can be fashioned into a weapon or an escape tool. Rather, MDOC must consider a policy that may allow prisoners to use these items, but requires their return so that an accounting can be made.

Conclusion

The findings outlined in this report lead to an undeniable conclusion: technology and personnel failures lead to Elliot's escape. There was a serious breakdown in the security measures at ICF. Staff inattentiveness and failure to comply with security policies and procedures played a significant role in Elliot's escape. ICF management's failure to ensure that facility security measures were operational and that staff complied with MDOC and ICF directives and policies also significantly contributed to the success of the escape.

MDOC must consider the recommended security changes contained in this report to help prevent future escapes. As these recommendations are implemented, Michigan citizens will be safer.

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